

Discussion

The GYTS is a school- based survey, conducted among school children aging 13 – 15 years old. It presents a clear picture of the magnitude of the problem of tobacco use among the youth and provide base – line data on tobacco use since no reliable data on the current situation exists.

Prevalence

The smoking prevalence rate among young people in many countries around the world where GYTS was implemented, shows that tobacco use ranges from 10% low to a high of 33%, and in Egypt, more than one in seven of all students aged between 13 – 15 years currently smoke.

Cessation

It is widely known that tobacco is the most important preventable cause of premature deaths in many countries. Studies have shown the strong relationship between smoking prevalence and lung cancer patterns. Because smoking is the major cause of lung cancer and lung cancer commonly takes 20 or more years to develop, smoking prevalence is an important predictor of future lung cancer patterns. Likewise, today's lung cancer patterns are a good indicator of the smoking prevalence of previous decades. Further more the younger a person is when they take up smoking, the greater their chances of contracting cancer later in life. Given the above – mentioned trends in smoking prevalence, it can safely be assumed that a majority of the youth that are current smokers will develop lung cancer before they reach the age of 35. Besides lung cancer, there are other diseases that studies have shown to be caused by smoking, which include heart diseases, strokes and a range of respiratory diseases.

The current trend predicts an increase in tobacco use among young people. Starting to smoke at an early age portends a lifetime addiction and premature death from tobacco – related

illnesses. More so, young people who start smoking early in life will often find it difficult to quit smoking.

More than six in ten currently smokers students reported that they desire to stop smoking and /or they tried to stop smoking during the past year but failed. Young people frequently experiment with new and sometimes risky behaviors. However they often don't take into serious consideration the long-term consequences of such behaviors. For youth, the risks of tobacco use are perceived to be remote and are out weighted by what they see as the immediate benefits. They tend to underestimate the addictiveness of nicotine and the difficulties associated with quitting, believing it is easier for young people to quit than adults.

It must be remembered that smokers including youth, are addicted to nicotine and need assistance in quitting. So any program that focuses on tobacco use among youth must address both prevention and cessation.

One other important feature that emerged from the survey is the high use of other tobacco products and this shows the easy access to these products the youth have with more and more females smoking just as much as males.

Information on students' knowledge and attitudes towards is wide-ranging since it focuses on parental involvement, potential peer pressure to use tobacco, attitudes towards the social benefits of smoking as well as the knowledge and attitude towards risks of tobacco use and the susceptibility of never smokers regarding their intention to remain non-smokers.

For example, more than one forth of never smokers expose to smoke from their parents or brothers in their homes. While above half of the currently smokers student. are exposed.

Media

The acquisition of such information could help monitor the broader or more general impact of media counter- advertising and deglomORIZATION campaigns, school curriculum, and youth empowerment efforts. On the other hand, increases in positive attitudes towards tobacco use and decreased agreement with statements about the risks of tobacco use have been related to increases in youth tobacco use rated. Youth are made to believe that smoking is cool, fun, glamorous, modern and western and watching their role models either parents, teachers or community leaders...etc smoke further encourages them to smoke too.

Efforts being made at sending anti-smoking messages to youth are being diluted by these positive images of smoking.

The use of media for providing information reaches a bigger audience but is non-interactive. An intensive mass media campaigns can produce significant results in helping to postpone or prevent smoking onset in adolescents, but there must be comprehensive education efforts, combined with media, school-based, and community-based activities.

The survey explored other interactive communication methods, discussions in a classroom environment. Students were asked if they were told or had discussed in class, the effects of smoking as well as why young people of their ages smoked. About half the students had discussed the harmful effects of smoking in class and even less had discussed the reasons why young people smoked (34.9%) these are very small percentages, considering the magnitude of the problem, the young ages these students start

smoking, the harmful effects and the opportunity the school environment presents for campaigning against smoking.

Laws

In Egypt, we have a law, which prohibits the sale of tobacco products to persons below the age of 18.

All students interviewed in this survey were below the age of 18 and of the current smokers, almost all of them (93%) obtained cigarettes from a store and were not refused because of their age. This shows the gap between the law and the practice.

Legislation on tobacco control is necessary but if it is not enforced it is useless. Enforcement of tobacco control policies enhances their efficacy by sending a message to the public that the community leadership believes the policies are important.

Most of the shopkeepers are aware of the age restriction but due to need for increased sales, but due to need for increased sales, they do not adhere to the requirement. Because of lack of enforcement of this law, the practice is further worsened because the shopkeepers know that nobody will prosecute them. Parents or adults, on the other hand, are not helping in this case. Some parents are known to send their under aged children to buy cigarettes on their behalf. The other complication to this scenario is the influx of street vendors in shopping centers and in supermarkets. Whenever strict control policies are enforced to prevent minors from accessing commercial sources of tobacco, young people tend to turn to social sources, e.g. older friends and family members, of tobacco products. Therefore, it is critical that minors' access restrictions be combined with a comprehensive tobacco control program that reduce the availability of social sources and limits the appeal of tobacco products.

ETS

Effort is being made to ban smoking in public places but at an individual level. Some service providers have banned smoking or have a smoking and a no-smoking zone in their premises. These efforts to protect non-smokers are not being

supported at the policy level, in order to effectively protect non-smokers from the passive smoking. Most of the places frequented by youth interviewed in the survey do not have anti-smoking rules within their premises, as shown by the large percentages of youth who said they were around others who smoked in the previous week, some being exposed to ETS on a daily basis. Besides the obvious discomfort of being around someone who smokes, the harmful effects of passive smoking are obvious to youth. About seven to eight in ten students are aware of the dangers of smoke from other people's cigarettes with about the same high percentages in favour of banning smoking in public places either smokers or non-smokers students.

The researches have been undertaken worldwide to reveal the evidence on the health effects of passive smoking. These reviews have concluded that passive smoking increases the chances of contracting or aggravating a range of illnesses including.

- Cardiovascular disease
- Lung cancer
- Asthma (particularly in children) either exacerbation and induction
- Acute irritation of the respiratory tract
- Bronchitis, pneumonia and other chest illnesses in children

Although there have been few studies on the economic costs of ETS, those which have examined this issue have found annual costs very high. Obviously, this would have severe impact on both the economic and the health status of the country.